



JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET WORKSHOP
VIRTUAL MEETING
MAY 27, 2020
MINUTES

Official Present: Chairman Henry Etheridge, Vice Chairwoman Barbara B. Clark, Councilman Johnson, Councilman L. Martin Sauls, Councilman Dr. Curtis Brantley

Staff Present: County Administrator Andrew Fulghum, Acting Clerk to Council Tisha L. Williams, Administrative Services Director Kimberly Burgess, Emergency Services Director Frank Edwards

Call to Order – Chairman Etheridge called the meeting to order at approximately 5:01 P.M.

Invocation led by Councilman Brantley

Pledge of Allegiance given by Councilman Johnson

Discussion of Budget

Chairman Etheridge asked Mr. Fulghum how he would like to get started in discussing the Budget. Mr. Fulghum advised Chairman Etheridge that it depends on how he would like for the to pursue. Mr. Fulghum also stated that Council and Administration did not have time to talk about the budget and if Council would like to have some time placed on the June 1, 2020 Council Meeting to discuss, he can do that. Mr. Fulghum reminded Council that at their last workshop, Ms. Burgess read her Memo that went more into detail about the budget and stated that the Chairman had some technical difficulties with his device at that time, as the last 2 pages the Chairman was not able to hear and if Council would like for Ms. Burgess to go over that information again she would. The Chairman stated that he would like to go over the memo again. Ms. Burgess began with the Operating Budget as it is \$30,530,100 which is \$674,275.00 less than last year. The Revenue/Property Taxes are anticipated to increase \$1,140,000 over last year and are merely due to 8% growth in the property values and last year. The County did not include any anticipated new growth for the Fiscal year 2021 in the Budget and the millage rate remains at 154. The County is legally permitted to raise the millage rate by 4.99%, or seven mills, each additional mil would provide \$145,766 in additional revenue and the entire seven would yield \$1,020,362. The Local Option sales Tax, which is estimated at \$3,600,000 which is \$100,000 less than last year. However, the credit will remain the same at \$2,700,000 and the credit factor will remain the same as well. The Fee and Lieu Revenue is \$500,00 greater than last year and that's based on actual receipts and the State aid to Local Government are expected to remain the same which is \$1,030,000. The County did reduce elastic revenues, business licenses, planning and permit fees, park and recreation fees by 20% over the actual year to date numbers received, based on the closures due to COVID-19. The Economic Development funds are slightly less than last year and there's detail listed before Council as to what they include. The County \$5,000 share for the Robertsville and Grays Restrooms, Sherwood Tract and asbestos abatement. Councilman Brantley asked Ms. Burgess which page she was on and Ms. Burgess advised that it was the first page of the memo. The County has an annual payment to the South Carolina regional alliance, and an \$25,000 airport generator grant match as well. Cash cart tariff was considerably more from last year as it was \$2.6 Million as of now it is \$120,000 and that is based on the amount SLED recommended in the IT Department and the County Approved that in January, however those funds have not been forwarded over as of yet to carry over. Ms. Burgess proceeded to speak about expenses and one of the largest lines were the Employee and Personnel cost, for the year 2021 the total personnel cost which includes salary and wages benefits, over time \$18,686,500 versus \$18,193,470 for the prior year which is a difference of \$493,000 which includes \$144,400 for new

personnel cost, in which some of those personnel cost includes the addition of a Network Administrator for the I.T Department which offsets the \$120,000 carry forward. The transition from a part-time to a full-time position for Tax Collector and the addition of three Lieutenants to the Marsh Cove Fire Station which is anticipated that they would be hired sometime in the fourth quarter of next year. Total Salary Wage increase \$247,000 primarily is the result of full year salaries for open positions that were eliminated in this fiscal year and the County had an increase in over-time of \$79,000, which reflects the actual amounts incurred this year. There was not an increase in contribution percentages for the retirement benefit however it did increase slightly which was 3.2% primarily due to open positions that were filled during the fiscal year and they are having contributions made on their behalf to the retirement fund. Workers Compensations increased 14% over this current year, medical insurance decreased 6% or about \$130,000 even though there is anticipated premium increase which is minimal at .033% and this is due research of the projected actuals and the decision to budget on the projected actual amount. Chairman Etheridge asked Ms. Burgess regarding the workers compensation increase, if the County had some "bad experiences" and Ms. Burgess stated she received a letter stating that Jasper County is ranked 3 of all the Counties in the state as far as workers compensation goes and yes the county has had some claims. Chairman Etheridge mentioned that in the past the County received refunds, and Ms. Burgess stated that in the past year the County did not receive a refund, however they did receive a \$40,000 increase in the premium. Chairman Etheridge stated maybe the County may need to have more safety meetings. Ms. Burgess also mentioned that the insurance premium are based on the employees in the budget that was completed prior so it's almost like it's 2 years in arrears. Councilman Brantley asked Ms. Burgess to give Council an example from the Assessor's office, adding that he noted that the recommendation for FY-21 budget is that the part-time positions become a permanent position and for Ms. Burgess to share with the Council the difference with that. Ms. Burgess stated that the personnel in the Assessor's Office is what the County considers or calls "temporary employees", adding that they run through the payroll and are able to receive all the benefits that any other employee would receive. Therefore, the thought is that if the County converts them from temp to permanent then the County won't need to retrain people when it's time to perform the reassessment again as they are already trained. Councilman Brantley asked Ms. Burgess to explain how much training she is talking about as for someone coming in. Ms. Burgess stated the employee would need to be brought up to speed on the computer software, what it means to be their job title in that department and to also consider how they would need to be found, as it cost the County money to recruit, test, retrain which could take from 3 to 6 months adding that the Human Resources Director would know more about that portion. Councilman Brantley inquired if the County would bring someone in without basic skills, Ms. Burgess stated that they would not need to train them how to use a computer but more so on how to use the software in that instance. Ms. Burgess explained the Fire and Dispatch Contracts, adding that the County has two, the Levy Fire and the Town of Ridgeland and they are in alignment with the current agreement which is \$286,00 for Levy and \$205,000 for the Town of Ridgeland. The current contract for Levy is \$255,000 plus the amount for workers compensation and the Dispatcher salary reimbursement agreement that the County has with the Town of Ridgeland and the City of Hardeeville has been reduced to \$15,000 in order to provide financial aid to the municipalities to transition to the new Emergency Records Management software, and the \$15,000 amount will be reduced for the next three years. Ms. Burgess stated that there are some new Budget items, such as the new Marsh Cove Fire Station as well as some associated interest estimated at about \$19,000 for the Construction Loan and the loan amount is \$1,177,380 and the annual lease purchase payment to Motorola Spillman and it is \$282,400 as it is for the Computer assisted dispatch and the emergency records management software which hopefully will be in operation April or May 2021. Ms. Burgess stated that the Morris Center budget request was put into the Agency Appropriations section, adding that in previous year they had been included and provided for the Accommodations Tax Revenue (ATAX). Chairman Etheridge inquired why the Morris Center was no longer being funded by the ATAX and Ms. Burgess stated that the ATAX money is for tourist related and she wasn't sure if that was an appropriate place for them to be funded, similar to JARM adding that maybe it should be. Chairman Etheridge stated that the Morris Center does draw a lot of tourist and Ms. Burgess stated that if that is the case then they should be placed back in the ATAX line. Ms. Burgess proceeded with the State Mandates adding that they are net \$7,297,900 and that is net the \$1,030,000 that the County receives for Local Government and it is approximately 24% of the total budgeted expenditures. Ms. Burgess also displayed to Council the current Capital Outlay list adding that the Capital request was removed from the budget this year and the only one that remains present and budgeted for annually are the waste containers and the compactors for the transfer stations, adding that the County had its first bid opening vendor registry via ZOOM and there was 2 bidders. Ms. Burgess also mentioned that the other item that's listed is the Fleet Replacement both the County and the Sherriff, adding that

many of the vehicles are 14 years old and the program includes routine maintenance. Ms. Burgess stated that the first year of the program, the expenditure would be greater due to the elimination or selling of the older vehicles and then having fewer each year be replaced in 3-5-year cycle and it's anticipated at \$500,000. Fire and Rescue placed a request to initiate a capital funding program for the replacement of equipment such as hoses, nozzles, breathing apparatus bottle, stretchers and thermal-imaging cameras, generators which are \$200,000. Ms. Burgess continued stating the Construction of the Communications tower at a site in the south end of the County, in the Levy/Hardeeville area to improve the emergency communications and increase the public safety, which is \$1,500,000. Chairman Etheridge inquired if there are any alternatives to the items that are being requested from Emergency Services, Ms. Burgess stated that discussed with Chief Edwards about the potential alternatives to his request, but she wanted to add it for Council to consider. Ms. Burgess continued with her next item which is the Temporary Terminal at the Ridgeland Claude-Dean Airport to provide a pilot lounge, restrooms, place to wait out the weather, it would be sort of like a construction site trailer that the County would be able to lease until the airport is built and that is \$22,000 and a fuel system at the airport and that would be \$1,500,000. Levy Fire Department made request for equipment in the amount of \$50,000, (8) sets of SCBA mask for \$60,000, a new pump for \$450,000 and a fireworks call reporting system for \$10,000. The Assessor made a request for new furniture at \$20,000. The Assessor, Auditor, Tax Collector and Treasurer have a request for an imaging project which would be \$85,000. The Department of Social Services would like some office up fits as well the Board of Voters Registration, adding that there are not any quotes or estimates received yet, therefore Ms. Burgess put in the budget not to exceed \$200,000 for both of those. The Department of Juvenile Justice needs some additional up fits not to exceed \$100,000. Councilman Brantley questioned what process is used to determine how Ms. Burgess will honor the requests of the different departments and organizations. Ms. Burgess stated that as far as the last 3 mentioned, she met with each of them individually and requested a list of what they wanted done, as far as what funding is provided for each that would be up to the Council. Councilman Brantley inquired what process does Ms. Burgess use to determine the recommendation to Council for funding. Ms. Burgess stated that she looks at each department or organization's situation or circumstances and place that in the budget for Council's consideration. Councilman Johnson asked Ms. Burgess if the budget for overtime increased by \$79,000 to reflect the actual amount in this year, are we talking about coming up money to pay overage or to cover the level. Ms. Burgess stated that she felt that it was probably underbudgeted last year and because she did make adjustments for disaster type, adding that she felt like if she continue budgeting for something that the County is not meeting in that budget, then maybe there should be another look at how the County is budget there. Councilman Johnson stated that he was not trying to say that it was good or bad, but his question is if the County is over \$80,000 does the County need to come up with the \$80 plus this year, Ms. Burgess stated no. Chairman Etheridge inquired if part of the issue is that positions aren't filled and Ms. Burgess stated some times when positions aren't filled, overtime increases adding that she knows that Council wants to set a goal in the budget and if they would like she could go back and take a look at it. Councilman Johnson inquired does the proposed budget absorbs the projected revenue for this year and Ms. Burgess answered yes. Councilman Johnson inquired concerning the capital expenditures stating if the three ways to pay for it is if the County were to raise the millage, borrow the money or invade the fund balance and Ms. Burgess stated that was correct. Chairman Etheridge inquired if the capital fund were brought to Ms. Burgess by the different departments, did we know about it and just have been "putting them off, how do we determine that. Mr. Fulghum replied some of both mentioned and that it does give Council some time to look at the 13-14 items listed understanding more so what the priorities are for the Council, adding that Admins priorities when trying to put together something are health safety, public first, legal department probably second and everything else probably a luxury adding that it's not to say that all the items are not needed. Mr. Fulghum stated that he believes that this budget year will give the County a good opportunity to create a capital improvement plan and over a multi-year period see if the County can't find a way to chip away at these and try to complete some of them for you. Chairman Etheridge stated that he knows Council would need to talk about the \$1.5 Million but inquired if there is not another way that these items could be worked on. Mr. Fulghum stated yes and that Chief Edwards is currently working on that adding there are two things stating that he doesn't know if it was recommended that Council spend a \$1.5 Million on that that particular project and Chief Edwards may have some creative ways to spend less on that and that will sort of collide with the Council's ability to pay anything and believes that Admin will have a plan for Council. Chairman Etheridge asked in other words, there's an alternative for that and Mr. Fulghum answered yes and that Chief Edwards talked about a booster and think that's all been evaluated and the real answer is that Council need a height of towers and asked Chief Edwards if that is correct and Chief Edwards answered that it was. Mr. Fulghum continued stating that there really isn't any cheaper way to do it but the

questions is how to obtain the revenue to do it and Admin has some ideas that are being explored to help obtain the revenue. Ms. Burgess stated that due to COVID-19 the objective was to pull out some of the line items from some request that were pulled out and set on this list as she thought that would be capital. Chairman Etheridge inquired if there is any other way to service fuel to airplanes without building a new fuel system. Mr. Fulghum stated yes and there they are currently evaluating other ways to do that, adding that there is fuel for sale out there now it's just now County operational. Councilman Johnson inquired if the plan was to have competitive fuel pricing and to hopefully make money from it hopefully. Mr. Fulghum responded yes. Vice Chairwoman Clark stated that the airport is one of the most important factors the County has right now. Vice Chairwoman Clark also added that she doesn't really know what else could be done to the budget due to the crisis and everything that County is going through and have been through, adding that she things that the Council needs to go forth with the third reading and put the budget to rest because Council can always come back due to the circumstances and adjust the budget and that she saw a few things in the budget that she is not too pleased with but at this time she's not to beat them across the head because everyone is tired, everyone has been working extraneously, employees and Council have been working tirelessly and thanked the Staff for doing such a great job. Chairman Etheridge inquired from Mr. Fulghum of when the Schools will have their budget over to Council, Mr. Fulghum referred the question over to Ms. Burgess as she would have more information on that. Ms. Burgess stated that at the last budget workshop, she understands that Dr. Anderson was going to request the same revenue that was in their current budget and after further discussion with the school district, their request was to actually keep the millage rate the same and to calculate their revenue based on the increase in the assessed value of a mil, adding that the value of the mil is \$111,015.00 so using that calculation and keeping the millage rate at 166 their revenue would \$16,996,126.00 which \$16,768,500.00 which would be \$435,000 over their current revenue amount. Ms. Burgess added that she has made that adjustment in the Ordinance and that she advised the School District that she would need their actual budget no later than August, early September so that it could be ready for the tax bill. Ms. Burgess stated that the School District's debt appropriation also changes as last year's was \$3,443,821.00 this year with keeping the millage rate at 25 using the new value of a mil, it would be \$3,663,400.00 or \$219,579.00 more. Chairman Etheridge inquired for clarity if the County is leaving the mil amount the same. Ms. Burgess stated that they wanted to leave the millage rate the same at 166 and 25 for the debt. Chairman Etheridge inquired if they would need to have three readings and Mr. Fulghum stated no, after the Council receives their information and after the 1st reading all they would need to do is the second reading. Mr. Fulghum stated that going forward if they would like to look at the school's budget, we can request a copy be provided. Chairman Etheridge stated that he would need a copy of their audit, Ms. Burgess stated that she has a copy of their audit and can provide the Council with a copy of it. Councilman Brantley asked Ms. Burgess to go the Capital and General Operations Budget and inquired how the misappropriations of fund handled and if it goes to Ms. Burgess or Mr. Fulghum. Mr. Fulghum asked if Councilman Brantley is mentioning the Elected Officials funding, Councilman Brantley stated that he is referencing in the paragraph "that management of individual accounts for the functions of elected officials shall be the responsibility of that elected official" therefore his questions is how are misappropriations of funds handled. Mr. Fulghum stated that the Council sets the millage and the budget for the elected offices, Admin monitors the elected officials and provide that information to the Council typically on a quarterly basis and try to give Council a heads up if there is an elected official that maybe expending a particular line item faster than Admin think is safe but as far as authority, they have the authority to spend their budget as they see fit. Councilman Brantley asked that Admin go Section 5 page 3, the expenditures not to exceed appropriations and it reads "*expenditures shall not exceed appropriations without the consent of County Council*" adding that his question is what penalty if any, if anyone exceeds the appropriations. Mr. Fulghum stated that the would be a decision of the County Council and typically how that's handled that it's in a subsequent year so in other words, if you had a department that overspent and it was an elected official, Council would probably consider that at the next budget session and remind them of that and perhaps Council could change their budget amount to be allocated to show them, Council does not like that type of behavior. Councilman Brantley inquired if the Council has Budgetary Workshops over the year and Mr. Fulghum stated yes and if there is an amount that was expended over their total budget it would typically require a Budget amendment. Admin would come back to Council with an Ordinance in order to rectify that "money" can't be spent, therefore Council would need to do a budget amendment and then Council would consider that in their next budget year. Councilman Brantley asked but if the elected official has exceeded their budget and they don't have any funds left for them to operate, then what? Mr. Fulghum stated that they can only operate under the budget that Council sets for them. Vice Chairwoman Clark stated that they would need to come back to amend the budget. Councilman Brantley asked Admin to go number 9 on page four, "*The County Council request*

shall be available for examination or an inspection by the Citizens of Jasper County” does that mean that every department is subject to inspections by the citizens of the County or examination by the Citizens of the County. Mr. Fulghum replied yes. Councilman Brantley asked if the Citizens would need to make a simple request for the budget and Mr. Fulghum advised yes as Admin recognize it’s their money, it is the County as a whole money. Chairman Etheridge asked if the working budget online now, Ms. Burgess stated no it is not. Chairman Etheridge asked if maybe it could go on the website as many people may have questions and Ms. Burgess stated that once revisions have been made and Council adopts, it will be placed on the website. Councilman Brantley asked Admin to go to the Budget Worksheet Report page 72 and inquired stated that if he understands that requires two positions if that was correct, Ms. Burgess stated yes it still does. Councilman Brantley asked what happened to the position last year, adding if that position was never filled. Ms. Burgess stated that was correct and that position was just filled in February and that she does have a correction on page 72 under line for Medical Insurance should be the amount of the department request that was right, the \$1,800 should actually be \$11,900. Chairman Etheridge stated that tax payments went from \$16,000 to \$63,000 what is that. Ms. Burgess stated that the County pays property taxes for the County’s Rental Building at Cypress Ridge and the County also have to pay property taxes to the equipment that they lease, therefore rather than including that as part of the lease payment, Admin took it as property taxes a separate line item to show the difference to what the County agreed to for the lease payment and what the property taxes are and the County has to pay it because it billed through the Department of Revenue. Councilman Brantley stated that he’s still on the Budget Worksheet report page 61, Agency Appropriations, what are the Organizations or Agencies that the County is state mandated to support on the list? Ms. Burgess stated the Solicitor, the Legislative Delegation, the Public Defender and the MIAP Assessment. Councilman Brantley inquired if that is the case, how does the County determine the support of those items. Mr. Fulghum stated that is a policy decision of the County Council as the Staff doesn’t have anything to do with that process. Councilman Brantley inquired when was this submitted to the Council. Mr. Fulghum stated this budget in regard to request are all the same except for the one Council has already eliminated this evening and all of the requests have been provided to the Council. Councilman Brantley stated that was correct, however it came with the recommended budget and he questioned when they were decided because they are part of the budget that was submitted to them. Mr. Fulghum responded that Staff funded what Council funded last year. Councilman Brantley inquired if the Council just “regurgitate” what they did last year. Mr. Fulghum stated that’s up to the Council if they want to entertain the old amount in request or the new requests, make additions or deletions it’s really up to the County Council. Chairman Etheridge mentioned the Jasper Animal Rescue Mission and their appropriations and Vice Chairwoman also inquired if JARM sends in a budget request as well? Ms. Burgess answered Vice Chair yes. Councilman Johnson stated that the Magistrate requested a Weekend Staff Member and he feels very strongly about that because otherwise the judge himself or herself would have to do somethings that are frankly in appropriate, meaning talking to victims and witnesses before they ever talk to the accused would be on shaky legal grounds. Ms. Burgess stated that she was trying to find the amount she requested, and confirmed it was the second item listed on the request and she does not know what that amount would be, and she will ask. Councilman Johnson stated that he really doesn’t have many questions. Chairman Etheridge stated that he noticed the increase in Overtime for a lot of the first responding departments and if it’s due to the way they work their shifts. Ms. Burgess stated that there is built in overtime in the pay for firefighter but it’s also due to unfilled positions. Council Brantley asked if they would be getting the overtime in so many words out right or would it based upon the need, Ms. Burgess answered stating that it would be based on the need. Chairman Etheridge inquired when do the fireman or ems personnel start receiving overtime in a bi-weekly setting, Chief Edwards answered stating that the work schedule of the fire and EMS employees is approximately 56 hours every week so in a 2 week cycle they work 112 hours. Per the Fair Labor Standard Act, anything over 106 hours, they receive overtime. So, every two weeks cycle they are receiving 6 hours of overtime as part of their normal pay per se. Chief Edwards also stated that you could drop that overtime pay, but you would need to hire more people. There is also overtime for training purposes because they are minimum Staffing, if they have one person on a Fire Unit and they call out sick, he has to train someone. Chairman Etheridge inquired how many Fire/EMS personnel does he have and Chief Edwards answered he believes the amount in field operations the number is 58, 12 in Communication and 4 in Admin so roughly about 75 people. Chairman Etheridge stated that his other concerns regarding the Sherriff Department’s budget being over 11%, Councilman Brantley then stated that what can be done. Mr. Fulghum it typically does not happen however Council may want to ask the County Attorney on what could be done about and perhaps Council can ask the Sheriff to come in and explain that. Councilman Johnson inquired the status of the Code Officer, Mr. Fulghum advised that due to COVID-19m the training was pushed back and that individual is working with the Chief Morris, Ms. Holt

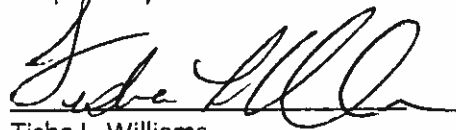
in HR and Ms. Wagner as far getting set back up with training. Mr. Fulghum advised Council that the Salary Study is almost complete and the group that is performing the study have met with the Staff to discuss the findings. So far it should that the pay is off and Mr. Fulghum would like to discuss more in the June 1, 2020 County Council Meeting Executive Session what the Consultant recommends.

Adjourn


Councilman Brantley moves as Councilman Johnson seconds the Motion to adjourn. The Motion passes with all Councilmembers present voting in favor. Meeting Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 6:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:


Tisha L. Williams
Acting Clerk to Council

Approved:


Henry Etheridge
Chairman